

Message Text

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TO USDEL SECRETARY PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY ROME

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: UR,IT

SUBJECT:GROMYKO'S VISIT TO ITALY: JUNE 26-29

1. SUMMARY: GROMYKO'S VISIT TO ROME, WHILE OF A ROUTINE NATURE, ASSUMED ADDED SIGNIFICANCE DUE TO RECENTLY CONCLUDED ITALIAN ELECTIONS.

--- VISIT PROVIDED OPPORTUNITY FOR NOT TOO SUBTLE SOVIET PRESSURE TO GET ITALY ON CSCE BANDWAGON; PRESSURE WHICH, SEEMINGLY, WAS RESISTED BY ITALIANS. END SUMMARY.

2. GROMYKO HAD BEEN SCHEDULED EARLIER THIS YEAR TO VISIT ITALY ACCORDING TO SOVIET-ITALIAN AGREEMENT FOR CONSULTATIONS AND TO REPAY THEN FOREIGN MINISTER MORO'S JULY 1974 VISIT TO MOSCOW, BUT VISIT HAD BEEN AT LEAST TWICE POSTPONED BECAUSE OF SOVIET PREOCCUPATIONS ELSEWHERE. EMBASSY ROME REPORTS THAT VISIT WAS HASTILY ARRANGED

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IN THAT ITALIANS HAD BEEN TOLD IN LATE MAY THAT GROMYKO

WAS UNABLE TO COME TO ROME UNTIL SEPTEMBER. TIMING WAS PROPITIOUS FOR MOSCOW SINCE IT CAME:

- SHORTLY AFTER PCI SUCCESSES IN ITALIAN ELECTIONS;
- JUST AT MOMENT WHEN SOVIET PRESSURE ON ITALY TO BRING CSCE TO JULY SUMMIT CONCLUSION WOULD BE MOST EFFICACIOUS;
- JUST PRIOR TO ITALY ASSUMING CHAIRMANSHIP OF EEC.

3. UNDERSTANDABLY NOTHING WAS PUBLICLY SAID CONCERNING THE RECENT ITALIAN ELECTIONS--AN INTERNAL POLITICAL MATTER .-ALTHOUGH THERE WAS UNDOUBTEDLY INTENSE SOVIET INTEREST IN THIS SUBJECT. IN THIS CONNECTION GROMYKO DID MEET WITH THE PCI LEADERSHIP, INCLUDING LONGO, BERLINGUER, CHIAROMONTE, NAPOLITANO, AND SEGRE, ON JUNE 28 FOLLOWING THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR'S RECEPTION. MOSCOW'S MEDIA REPORTING ON THE "EXCHANGE OF OPINIONS" BETWEEN GROMYKO AND BERLINGUER AND CO. DID NOT CLAIM ANY IDENTITY OF VIEWS DURING THE "FRIENDLY AND COMRADELY" DISCUSSION.

4. MOSCOW'S INITIAL MEDIA REACTION TO THE MID-JUNE ELECTIONS WAS TO HAIL THE "NEW, GREAT SUCCESS" FOR THE PCI. SOVIET COMMENTATORS HAVE SEEN IN THE ELECTIONS THE POSSIBILITY OF BOTH AN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SHIFT TO THE LEFT IN ITALIAN POLICIES.

5. GROMYKO'S COMMENTS ON CSCE AS REPORTED IN THE MEDIA CLEARLY INDICATED SOVIET PRIORITY ATTACHED TO THIS TOPIC DURING TALKS. ACCORDING TO MOSCOW DOMESTIC SERVICE IN RUSSIAN, GROMYKO IN HIS JUNE 29 PRESS CONFERENCE LABELED THE JULY SUMMIT CONCLUSION OF CSCE AS "THE NUMBER ONE QUESTION TODAY". MOSCOW'S CONCERN OVER CSCE WAS EVIDENT IN GROMYKO'S REMARKS REPORTED BY MOSCOW'S DOMESTIC SERVICE TO THE EFFECT THAT "GOVERNMENTS WHICH STILL EVINCE ANY WAVERINGS ON THIS ISSUE TAKE NO SMALL RESPONSIBILITY ON THEMSELVES. I WOULD LIKE TO BELIEVE THAT THE VOICE OF ITALY, A CLEAR AND DISTINCT ONE, WILL BE HEARD WHEN THIS ISSUE IS RESOLVED."

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6. NONETHELESS, THE JUNE 29 COMMUNIQUE MARKING THE END OF GROMYKO'S VISIT STRUCK CLOSELY TO THE WESTERN LINE ON CSCE. ACCORDING TO THE TASS SUMMARY, THE TWO PARTIES STRESSED THEIR BELIEF THAT A SUCCESSFUL CSCE CONCLUSION

WOULD HAVE SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE FURTHER POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONS IN EUROPE AND AGREED THAT ALL PARTICIPANTS SHOULD BEND EVERY EFFORT TO ENABLE THE FINAL

STAGE TO BE HELD AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL BEFORE THE END OF JULY.

6. WE ARE STRUCK BY ROME ANSA'S JUNE 28 REPORT WHICH HAD GROMYKO TELLING FONMIN RUMOR OF SOVIET CONCERN THAT THE EEC COULD REPRESENT AN OBSTACLE TO BILATERAL TIES BETWEEN CEMA AND EEC MEMBERS. ANSA CLAIMS RUMOR REBUTTED GROMYKO'S REMARKS, POINTING OUT THAT ONE OF THE CHIEF PURPOSES OF THE EEC WAS TO DEVELOP TIES WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD AND CITING ITALY'S OWN TEN-YEAR ACCORD WITH THE SOVIET UNION. GROMYKO'S ALLEGED CONCERN TAKES ON ADDED SIGNIFICANCE DUE TO ITALY'S FORTHCOMING CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE EEC BEGINNING IN JULY.

7. GROMYKO PAID WHAT HAS NOW BECOME ROUTINE (FOURTH TIME) CALL ON POPE, AN EXCHANGE WHICH SERVES VATICAN PURPOSES BY ENABLING IT TO INDICATE ITS CONTINUED CONCERN FOR CATHOLICS IN EASTERN EUROPE. GROMYKO CALLED ON PRIME MINISTER MORO AND ON PRESIDENT LEONE. MENTION WAS MADE OF LEONE'S SCHEDULED FALL 1975 VISIT TO THE SOVIET UNION. NO MENTION WAS MADE, HOWEVER, OF A BREZHNEV VISIT TO ITALY THIS FALL ABOUT WHICH THERE HAS BEEN SOME SPECULATION. IN FACT, THE ONLY MENTION OF BREZHNEV CAME IN GROMYKO'S REPEATED REFERENCES TO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS JUNE 13 REMARKS ON SOVIET-ITALIAN RELATIONS. IN THAT SPEECH BREZHNEV HAD SIMPLY LISTED ITALY AMONG THOSE COUNTRIES WITH WHICH RELATIONS SHOULD BE FURTHER IMPROVED. INGERSOLL

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